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Government
Publications

THE SOUTH SIDE OF THE CIVIC SQUARE



CITY OF TORONTO PLANNING BOARD
1958

*This volume was donated to
the University of Toronto by
Derek J. W. Little
President, Municipal Planning
Consultants Co. Ltd.*

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CITY OF TORONTO PLANNING BOARD

REPORT ON THE SOUTH SIDE OF THE CIVIC SQUARE



SCOPE OF REPORT:

This report deals with the development of the land on the south side of Queen Street opposite the Civic Square. It is set out in the following sections:

Introduction.....	Page	1.
Present Position.....	"	1.
Required Development.....	"	2.
Development Problems.....	"	4.
Development Methods.....	"	4.
Summary.....	"	7.

INTRODUCTION:

Ever since the Civic Square was conceived it has been recognized that buildings on the south side of Queen Street, between Bay and York Streets, would form an integral and important part of the whole composition. This was clearly illustrated in the proposal put forward in 1911 and reiterated in subsequent proposals. When the Civic Square site was designated in 1947 the principle was again recognized by City Council in the enactment of By-law 16549 (Appendix 'A') to control the design of buildings overlooking the Square.

With the clearing of the site, the construction of the underground garage, and the launching of the international competition for the design of the City Hall and Square it has become more evident than ever that the future development on the south side of Queen Street is of great importance to the successful completion of the Square. As a consequence the Board of Control requested this report from the Planning Board.

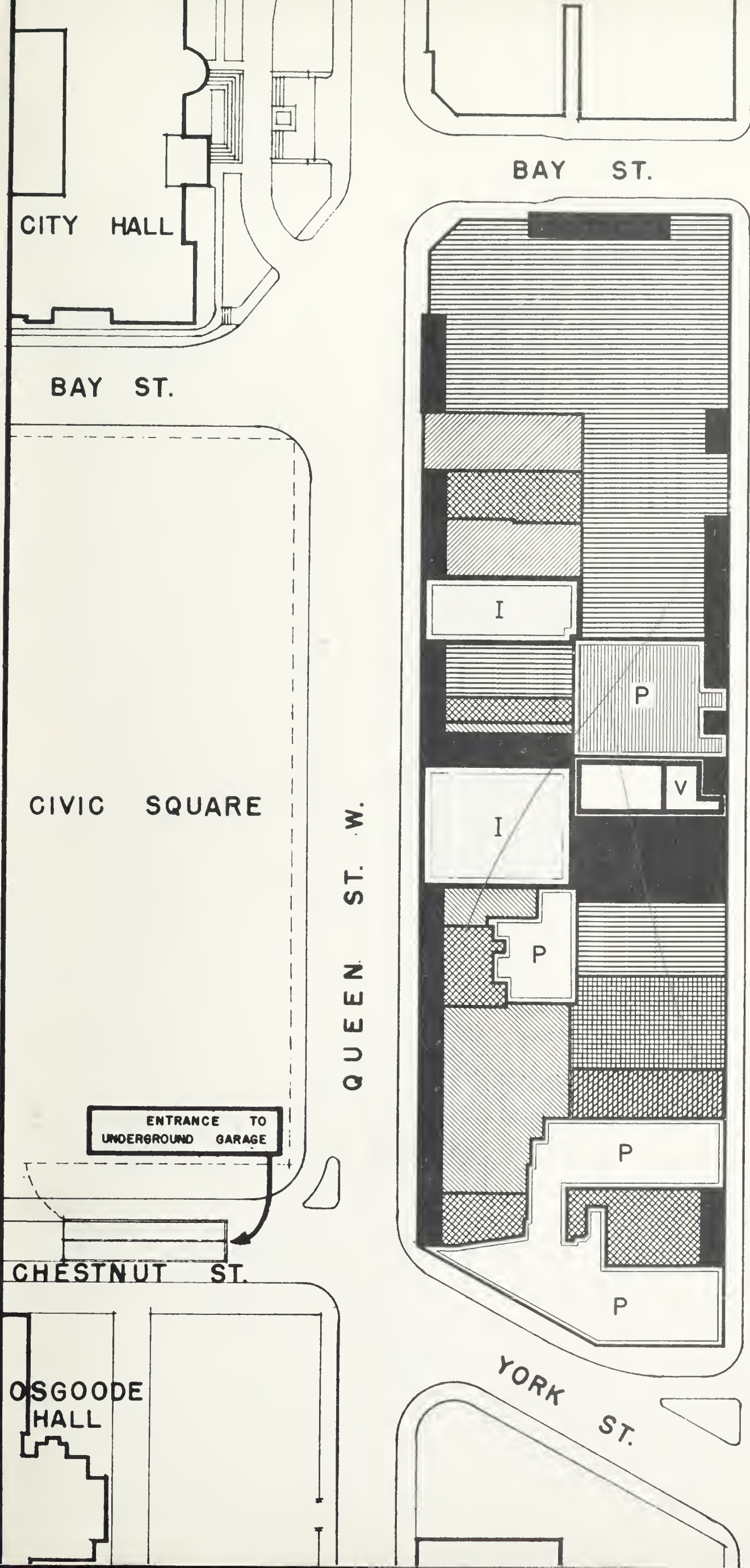
PRESENT POSITION:

In order to obtain a clear picture of the relevant facts about the properties in the block bounded by Queen, Bay, Richmond and York Streets a series of studies was made. Diagrams 1 to 4 reproduced in this report show:

1. Land Use
2. Building Heights
3. Ownerships
4. Land Assessment.

Other diagrams and data are available in the City Planning Board office.

The buildings in the block at present are very varied in size, age and condition. As would be expected, the Bay Street buildings are the largest. The Richmond Street buildings vary greatly but generally reflect the activities



EXISTING
LAND USE

LEGEND

-  RESIDENTIAL
-  HOTEL ROOMING HOUSE
-  AUTO SERVICES PARKING LOT
-  AUTO SERVICES PARKING GARAGE
-  CINEMA THEATRE
-  WAREHOUSES
-  OFFICES & BANK
-  COMMERCIAL
-  OFFICES
-  INDUSTRIAL
-  VACANT BUILDING
-  VACANT LAND

SCALE 1" = 100'



EXISTING
BUILDING HEIGHTS

LEGEND

○ NO. OF STOREYS

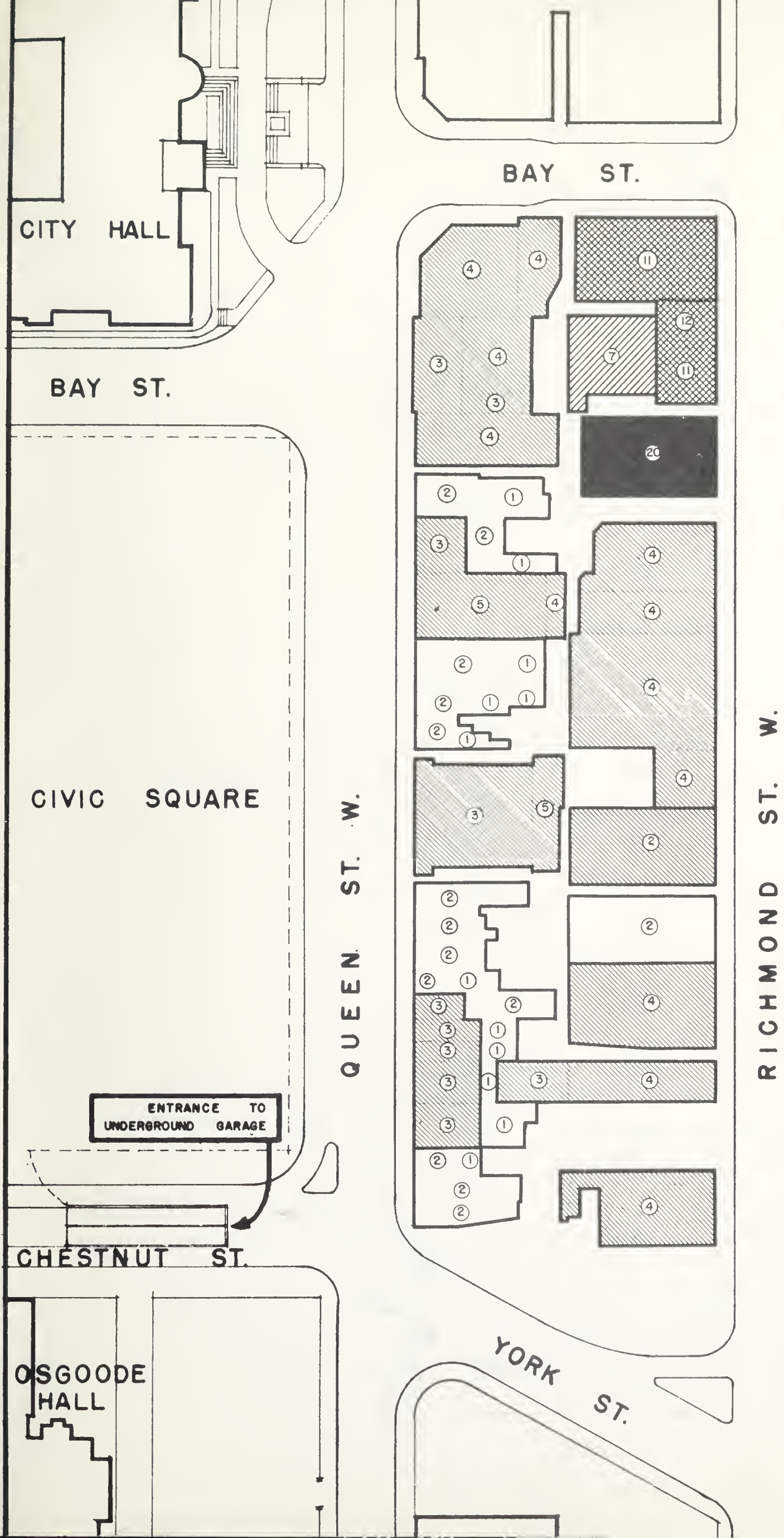
□ 0 - 2 STOREYS

▨ 3 - 6 STOREYS

▩ 7 - 10 STOREYS

▤ 11 - 14 STOREYS

■ 15 STOREYS
OR OVER



SCALE 1" = 100'



EXISTING
OWNERSHIPS

LEGEND

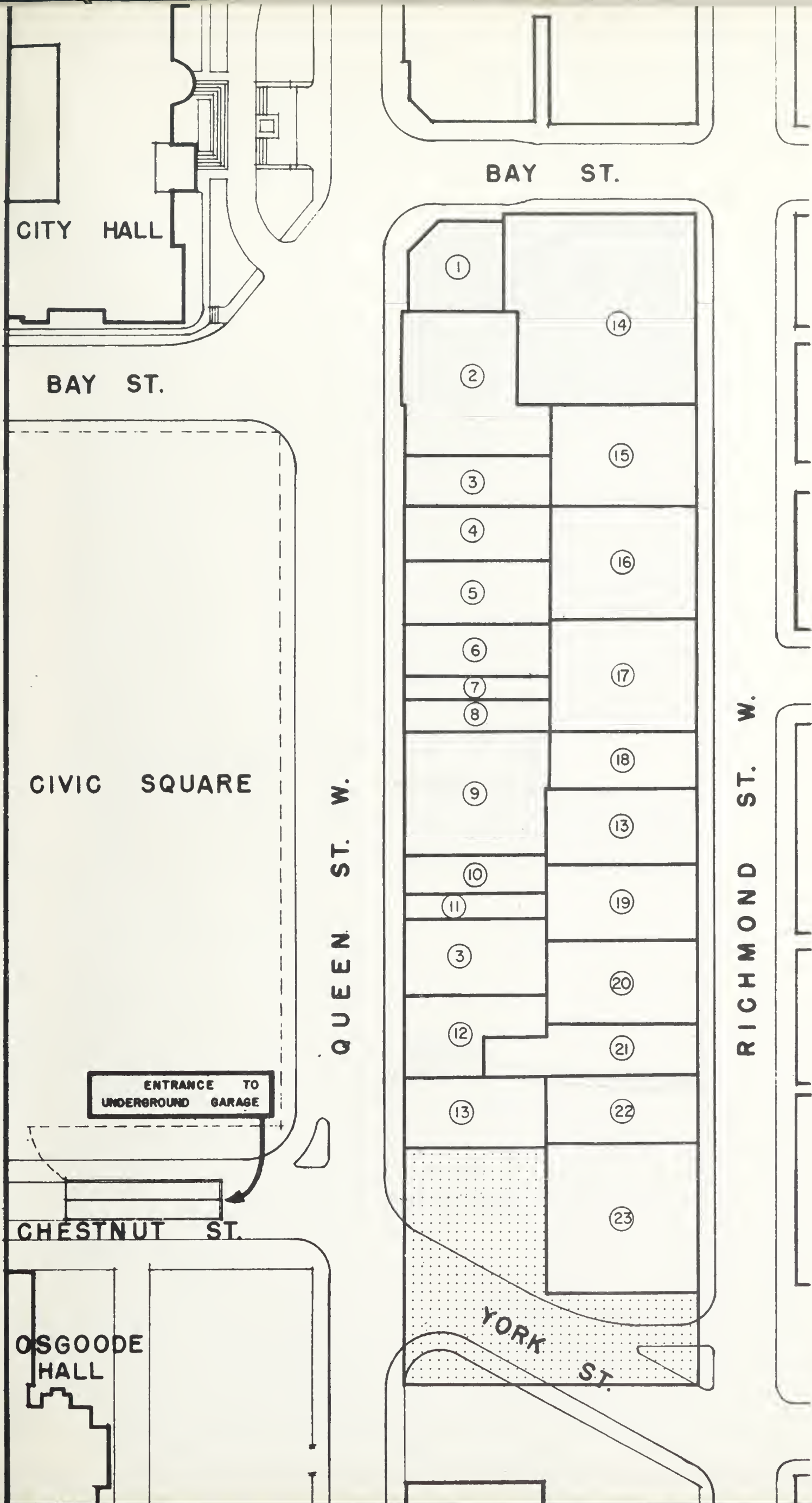
 CITY
OWNERSHIP


DIFFERENT NUMBERS
REFER TO DIFFERENT
OWNERSHIPS.

SCALE 1" = 100'



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EXISTING LAND ASSESSMENT

LEGEND

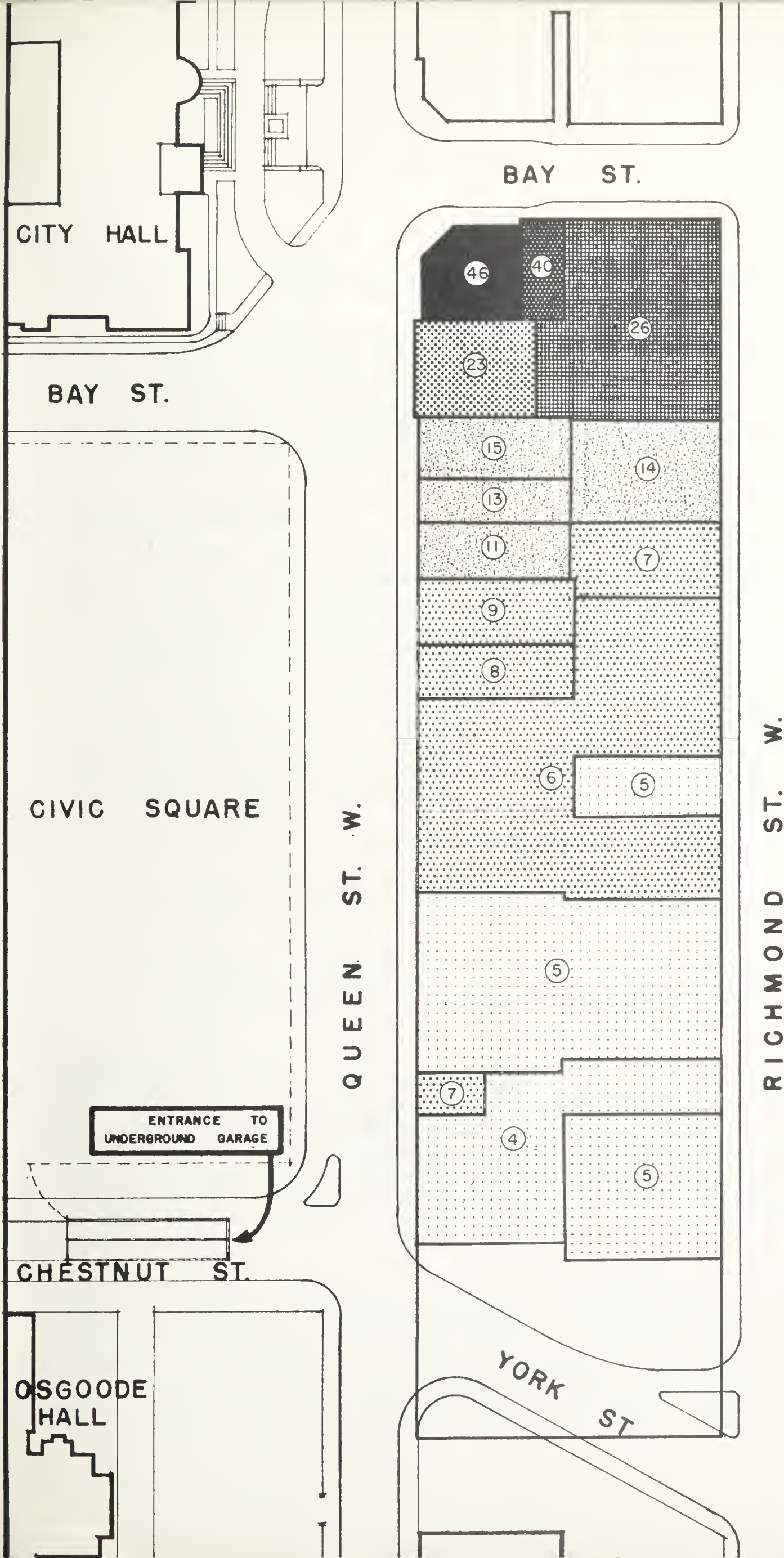
DOLLARS PER
SQUARE FOOT

	0 - 5
	6 - 10
	11 - 15
	21 - 25
	26 - 30
	36 - 40
	46 - 50

SCALE 1" = 100'



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in the business district to the south. York Street is vacant, pending action on the York Street diversion between Richmond and Queen Streets.

The Queen Street frontage is without doubt the poorest. The buildings are mostly small, old and in poor condition. Many are the original buildings put up when the land was subdivided and formed the edge of the old, poor-quality area which has now been cleared to make way for the Civic Square. They remain as reminders of that area, bear little relation to surrounding developments, and are ripe for demolition and replacement.

REQUIRED DEVELOPMENT:

Within the Civic Square, the construction of the underground garage ensures that the area immediately north of Queen Street will remain substantially open. The new City Hall will be to the north while the east and west flanks are bounded by the present City Hall and Osgoode Hall respectively. The space will thus be enclosed by handsome development on three sides. The problem is to ensure that the fourth side, south of Queen Street, will be a worthy part of the composition. If it is, the Square will be greatly enhanced: if it is not, the Square will lose a great deal in character. It is clearly in the public interest to ensure that the Square is completed by handsome development south of Queen Street. This location, overlooking the Square and adjoining the city centre, is ideal for high quality office accommodation.

There are two basic types of design which could be used:

- (a) a single building whose facade would form a fine closure to the Square and an effective foil to the space and buildings on it;
- (b) A group of buildings worked out as a comprehensive design which would complement the Square. A complex scheme of this sort can be regarded as an extension of the Square. It could only be worked out once the design of the Square and City Hall were known.

Either type of design could be successful. The first, however, has certain advantages: (i) it is appropriate to the scale and nature of the Square; (ii) it is very suitable for high quality offices, and (iii) it can be achieved almost entirely on the properties fronting Queen Street only, unlike the second type which would require the whole block. Partly for these reasons, and partly because the second type can not be worked out without knowing the final design of the Civic Square, attention in this report has been focussed mainly on the first type of design.

A building of this type should present to the Square a continuous facade which complements rather than dominates or competes with the other buildings. From Bay to York Street is a long block, 675 feet in length. The building height should be in proportion with the space and other buildings around the Square. If it is too low it will not be an effective flank to the Square, while if it is too tall it will dominate all else because of its mass. Studies of all of these factors have led to the conclusion that the building should be 80 to 90 feet tall.

It should be noted that the jury on the Civic Square competition was very aware of the problem of the development of the south side of the Square and commented as follows in their report to the Mayor following the preliminary stage of the Competition:-

"In considering the many designs for the City Hall and Square submitted in the International Competition we were very conscious of the surroundings of the site. As our work progressed we came to the following conclusions.

- (6) Our main concern has been with the quite unworthy appearance of the buildings facing the site on Queen Street. It would be disastrous if the buildings were to remain as they are. But this is extremely unlikely as the action of the City Council in developing the Square will make the whole block ripe for redevelopment.

We have carefully considered the form of the redevelopment, and we have firmly come to the conclusion that the only satisfactory way to establish a facade worthy of the position is for redevelopment to follow a uniform design for that length of the South side of Queen Street lying between Bay and York Streets.

We recommend that the height of the facade should not exceed ninety feet and that there should be a continuous open arcade under the buildings along this length of Queen Street. In order to achieve a uniform design it would be necessary for the City Council to take action either through the establishment of a special by-law or preferably through the acquisition of the property concerned."

In working out a series of designs to meet requirements it has proved most satisfactory to have a continuous arcade at ground level with shops, banks, restaurants, etc. facing onto it. Not only does this have the functional advantage of a covered walkway along what is destined to be the busy side of the Square, it also permits a substantial degree of freedom to individual store-owners while keeping the whole building unified in design. The great office facade above the arcade would overlook the spacious square in the heart of the city.

Two examples of what are considered to be suitable designs are shown in elevation and perspective in Diagrams 5 to 8. The model shown in Diagram 9 has been simplified to illustrate the bulk and general shape. The drawings show more clearly the kind of building contemplated. The facades present an attractive, interesting wall to the Square. They have character but are not dominating. They are appropriate to the length of building and help to keep the viewer's attention in the Square rather than leading his eye out of it.

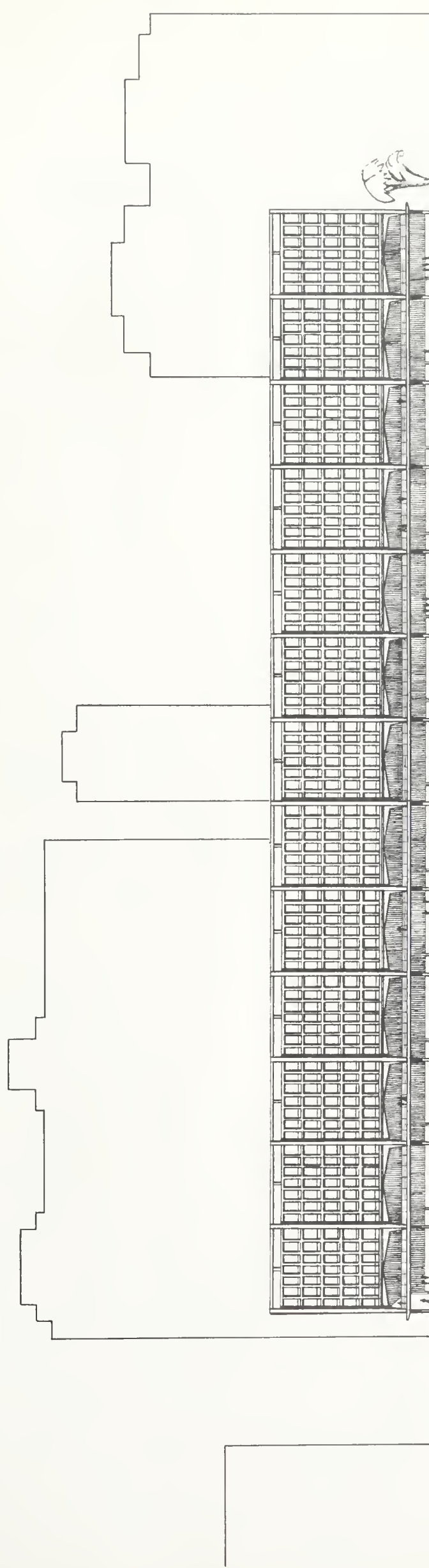


Diagram 5 Proposed development. Example 1. elevation

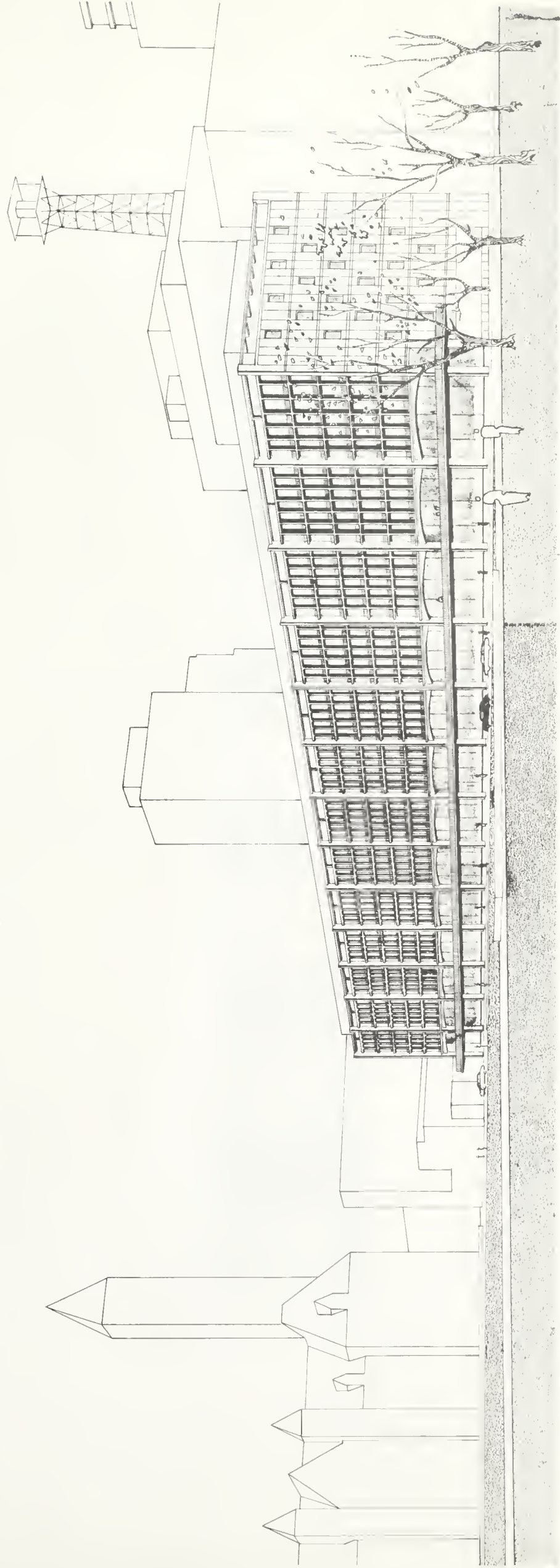


Diagram 6 Proposed development. Example 1. perspective

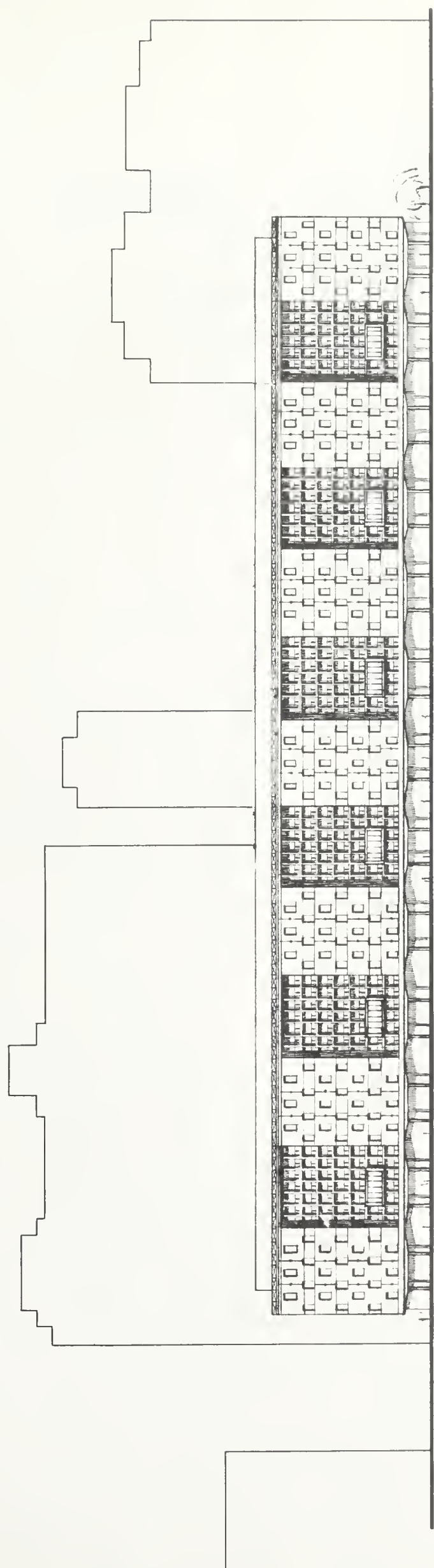


Diagram 7 Proposed development. Example 2. elevation

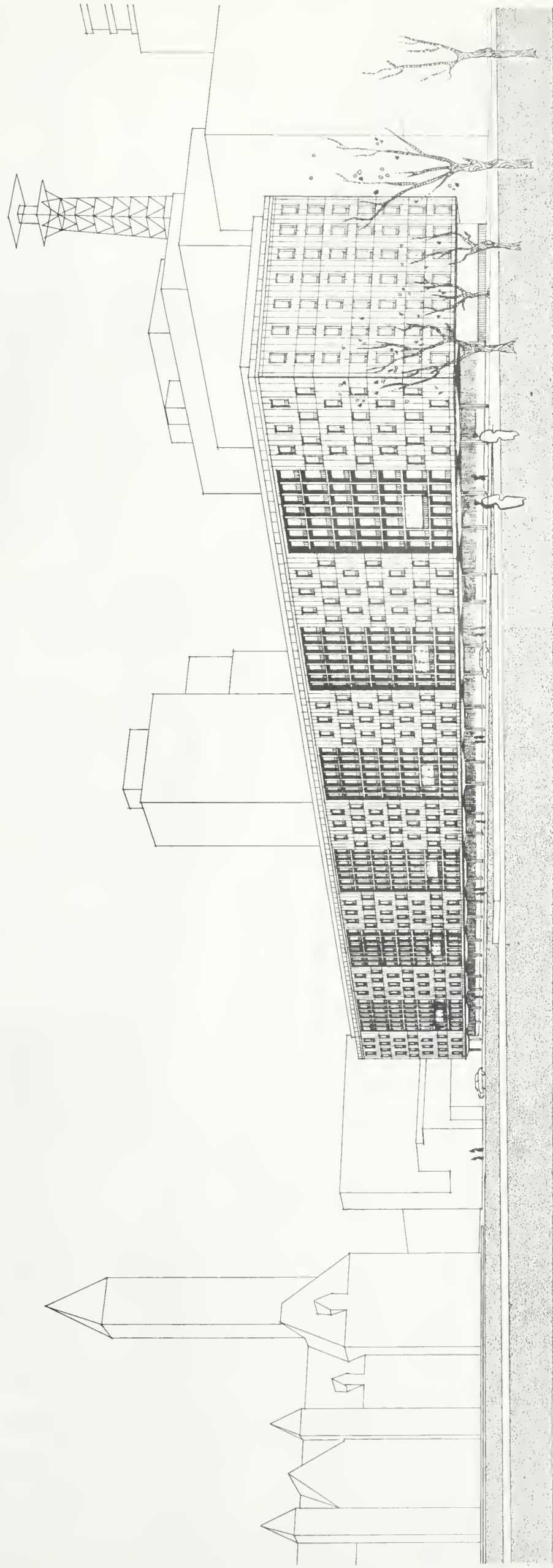


Diagram 8 Proposed development. Example 2. perspective.



Diagram 9. Photograph of model showing example 2.

DEVELOPMENT PROBLEMS:

Whatever design for the south side of the Civic Square is prepared and accepted, nothing will be accomplished unless steps are taken to see that it is actually carried out. This means that building must take place and that it must be to the chosen design.

For building to take place there must be an effective demand for the space and the land must be available in satisfactory building sites. In this case the location is so good that there is little doubt about the demand being strong enough though building might take place in stages as the market dictated. However, the land would certainly have to be assembled into satisfactory building sites as it is at present split up into a great many ownerships, and there are few sites large enough for adequate office buildings. Left to the normal course of events there would inevitably be several sites left with one or two-storey buildings on them. Uneven, piecemeal development would result instead of a long building of unified design. This is illustrated in Diagram 11.

With so much building almost certain to take place it will be difficult to ensure adequate servicing. The main problem will be vehicular access. Without adequate provision there would be danger of congestion when only part of the land was developed and this would act as an additional deterrent to the development of the remainder. In this block there is no public or common access to the rear of the properties. Several have their own lanes or easements but these are generally inefficient and might disappear with rebuilding. Service access directly from Queen or Richmond Streets will not be adequate and would not be acceptable. It is, therefore, proposed that a lane be created in the centre of the block with access at either end to Richmond Street. See Diagram 10. It is suggested that it be taken from the rear of the properties fronting on Queen Street, except at the ends, so that full advantage could be taken of it when the Queen Street frontage was being developed. Diagram 10 also shows a pedestrian walk through the block to connect with Sheppard Street. This should prove particularly useful as the area between Bay and York Streets builds up south of Richmond Street.

DEVELOPMENT METHODS:

Normal by-law control is not sufficient to realise the desired development, even though it be reinforced by By-law 16549. Not only is the volume of the proposed building less than that permitted by the Zoning By-law but the success of the design depends on strict control.

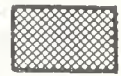
Three avenues have been explored:

- (a) Design control by special by-law
- (b) Land assembly by agreement;
- (c) Redevelopment through public action.

(a) Design Control by Special By-law. A special by-law could be drafted under Section 390 of the Municipal Act, to describe the proposed building by

PROPOSAL
PLAN

LEGEND



BUILDING

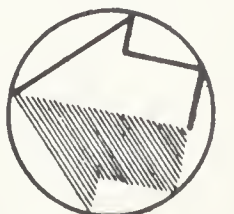


SERVICE UNITS

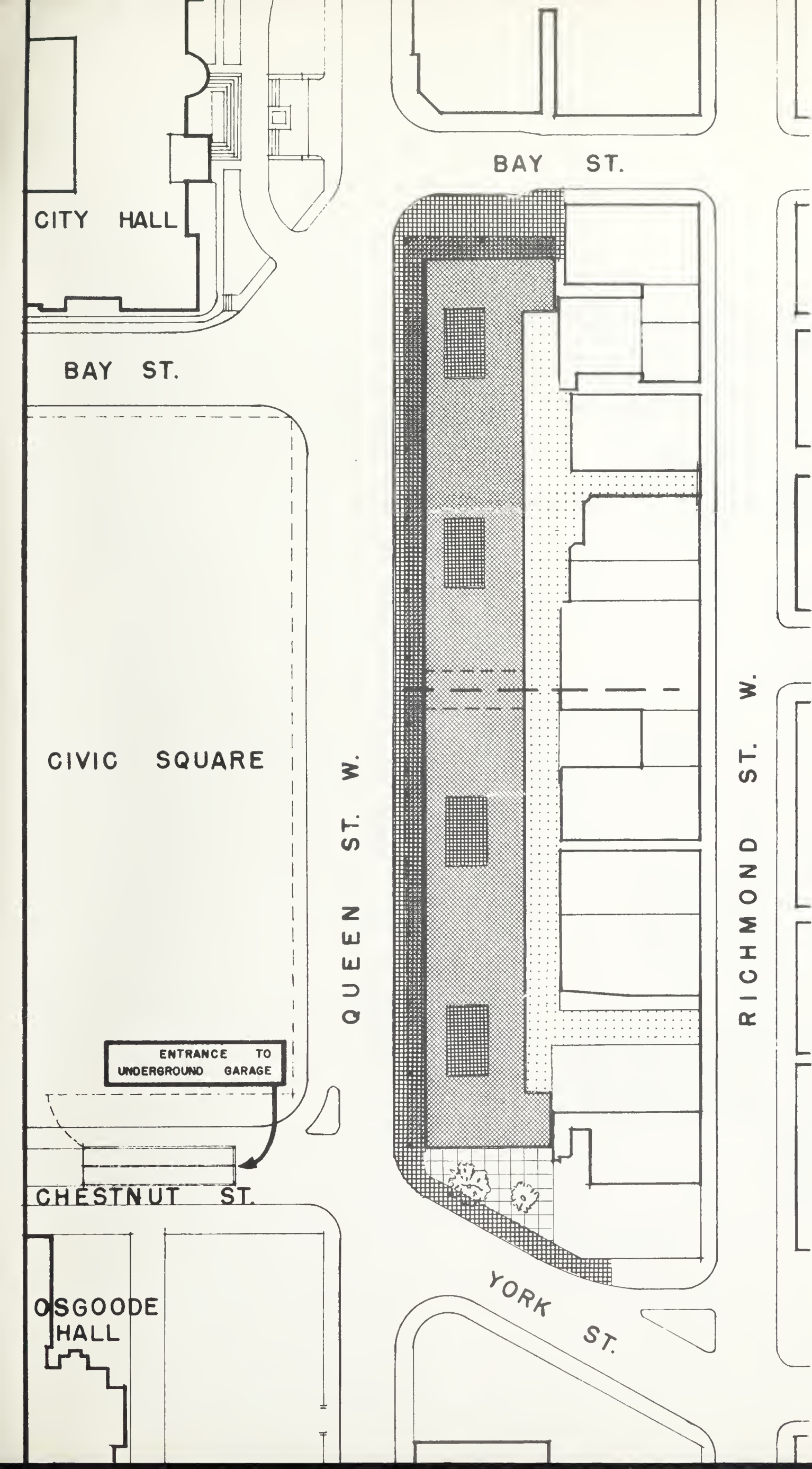


SERVICE LANES

SCALE 1" = 100'



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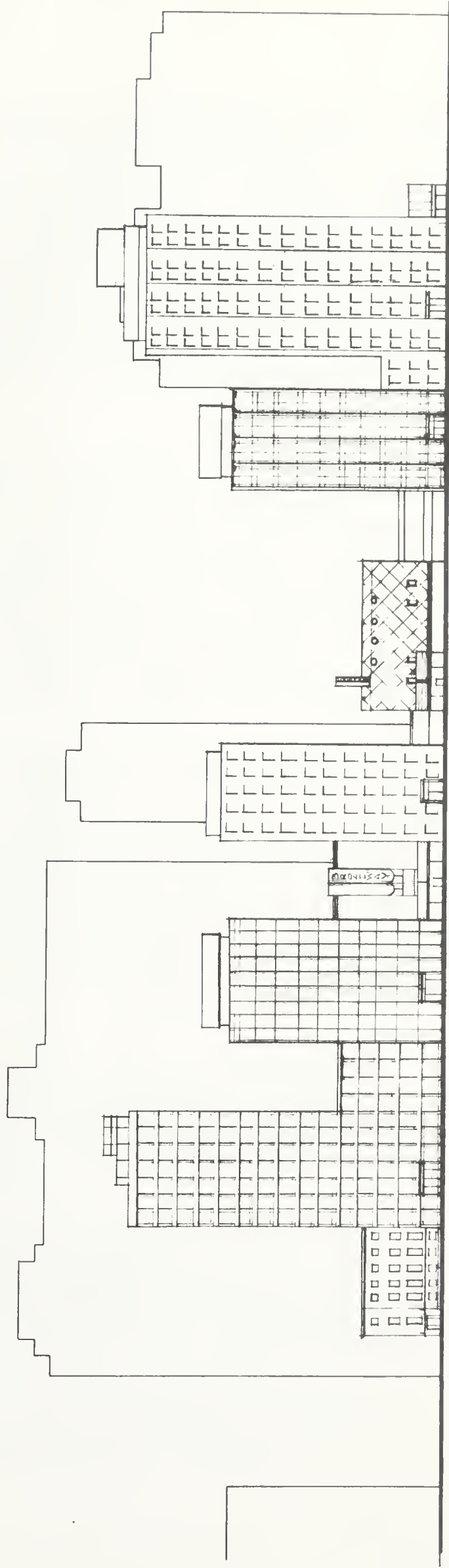


Diagram II Possible development under existing conditions.

detailing features such as cornice and sill heights, window spacings and materials. However, this would only become effective when a developer erected a section of the building and there are many factors which make it unlikely that the complete facade would ever be erected. Present owner-ships are mostly much too small for development: assembly by developers would be difficult, and failure to assemble would almost certainly leave gaps. Property lines in many cases would not match the structure so that a developer would be under a handicap until he could make arrangements with his neighbour or neighbours. The proposed rear lane could not be opened through until existing buildings had been cleared, and it would be almost impossible to achieve any advantages of common services for the whole building.

The main attraction of the special by-law approach would be in its apparent simplicity of enactment and operation. It would, however, interfere with private development rights both in limiting the amount of development to a greater degree than at present and, more seriously, in requiring that when building took place it must be of a type which would be almost impossible, and certainly uneconomic, on the majority of existing holdings. Compensation would almost certainly be sought by the owners. Even were the by-law accepted by the Municipal Board it is highly unlikely, for the reasons already outlined, that it would result, by itself, in the handsome development sought.

- (b) Land Assembly by Agreement. The assembly of the land into one or more satisfactory building sites is an essential pre-requisite to any attempt to achieve the desired development. The normal process of assembly is through purchase by developers, but that would be extremely difficult in this case because of the large number of small parcels, and there would almost certainly be gaps left. An alternative is assembly by agreement among all the owners. In such an arrangement the land would be pooled and might be transferred to a development trust in which each owner would have a share in proportion to the value of his original holding. The development trust would sell, lease or develop the land.

To ensure that the development was in accordance with the desired design it would be necessary to supplement land assembly arrangements with a special by-law, such as referred to above, or equally binding agreements. It would also be necessary to open the proposed lane in the centre of the block by public action.

Land assembly agreements of this sort have the advantage to the individual owner of ensuring him a share in the development, in exchange for which he forfeits his right to individual bargaining and the exploitation of any advantage he might have. In theory, the desired development could take place through the efforts of the present owners with a minimum of public action.

Such agreements are, however, very complicated and difficult to attain, and can be invalidated by the refusal of one or two owners to participate. To find out how acceptable the idea might be, as well as to ascertain the

interests of property owners in the block, most owners were interviewed in the spring of this year. The situation was outlined and the three methods of trying to achieve comprehensive development described. Owners were asked about their interest in staying where they were, selling or developing the land, and whether they would be prepared to enter into a land assembly agreement with their neighbours. Most indicated that they would be prepared to consider this if the City took the initiative and made the arrangements. Some indicated that they wished to stay as they were, a few stated that they would prefer outright expropriation and one or two wanted to be left free to sell or develop their own properties without interference from the City. Possible arrangements between co-operating owners were only touched upon and the size and design of possible buildings were not elaborated as this was considered premature. Several owners could not be reached. While the interest expressed in the idea of agreement between owners on land assembly was encouraging, those dissenting would make it extremely difficult to work out successful arrangements even if all who expressed interest could be persuaded to enter the final agreements. Overall, it is unlikely that this approach would be successful.

- (c) Redevelopment through Public Action. Outright public acquisition of the land under Section 20 of The Planning Act, 1955, is the one certain method of ensuring that the desired development is achieved. It is relatively simple and straightforward and, by assembling the land in one parcel, achieves the maximum advantages for building on the site.

It seems likely that the land on the south side of Queen Street, plus the two lanes through to Richmond Street, would cost about \$7,000,000.00 to acquire. Once acquired it could then be sold or leased to developers to carry out the chosen scheme. There would be some advantage in leasing as the City would retain control of this important part of the Square, the developers' financing would be eased, and in the long run a better financial return could be obtained by the City. The value of the land for immediate use would be below the cost of acquisition but this would be counter-balanced by the increment due to assembly and the progressive benefit from the development of the Civic Square and the building up of surrounding commercial development. An estimate might be made by the City Treasurer and the Director of Real Estate.

From time to time developers have indicated interest in developing this property, either in whole or in part. They have mostly sought to join with the City in a redevelopment scheme which would be built up by them. They have been advised that it is very unlikely that the City would be able to make a prior commitment to any one developer and that a fair and open system of selecting a developer after the land was acquired would probably be preferred. In these circumstances no developer could commit himself to any definite bid to execute the project but the interest shown indicates that there should be little difficulty in finding a satisfactory developer. Some of the present owners have indicated a desire to be relocated in the new buildings, and it should be possible to accommodate them.

Overall, it seems that a redevelopment scheme under Section 20 of The Planning Act, 1955, is the best approach and the only one that would guarantee the successful achievement of the City's proposals.

SUMMARY:

Page ref.

1. To ensure that the Civic Square will be fully satisfactory it is essential that the south side of Queen Street, between Bay and York Streets, be developed according to a suitable design.
2. An appropriate building would have a handsome facade 80 to 90 feet in height, with an arcade and shops at ground level, and prestige offices above. This could be achieved on the Queen Street properties alone with only service lane connections to Richmond Street. Diagrams 5 to 10.
4. Land assembly and design control are essential to achieve the desired development. Without this, piecemeal building with gaps in it would be inevitable.
6. Redevelopment under Section 20 of The Planning Act, 1955, is the best way of executing the project.
6. Developers are interested in the site and agreements could be made with them after the land is acquired.

BY-LAW NO. 16549

To restrict to use for offices and other purposes only lands and buildings within the area bounded by Queen, Bay and York Streets and a line 90 feet south of Queen Street.

(Passed April 1, 1946)

The Council of the Corporation of the City of Toronto enacts as follows:

- (1) No person shall use any land within the area of the City of Toronto hereinafter described for any purpose except an office or financial building, an institutional or educational building, a retail business, an hotel, a club, a theatre or any federal, provincial government purpose, other than manufacturing. The following is the area referred to, namely: Bounded on the north by the southerly limit of Queen Street West, bounded on the east by the westerly limit of Bay Street, bounded on the west by the easterly limit of York Street and bounded on the south by a line parallel to and distant 90 feet measured southerly from the southerly limit of Queen Street West.
- (2) No person shall erect or use any building within the area described in section 1 for any purpose except an office or financial building, an institutional or educational building, a retail business, an hotel, a club, a theatre or any federal, provincial or municipal government other than manufacturing.
- (3) No person shall erect any building within the area described in section 1, until the plans and elevations thereof have been considered by the Committee on Property and Council after receiving a report thereon from a Committee consisting of the Commissioners of Buildings and City Planning and two or more representatives of the Toronto Chapter of the Ontario Association of Architects and the City Planning Board.
- (4) No person shall erect any building within the area described in section 1 or any building upon such land for the display of any sign, poster, poster board, banner or other advertising matter of material whatsoever, except the name of such building and the names of the occupants thereof, and of their respective business and undertakings, in metal letters, metal panels or carved in stone.
- (5) Every person who contravenes any of the provisions of the by-law shall upon conviction thereof, forfeit and pay at the discretion of the convicting Magistrate a penalty ~~not exceeding~~ (exclusive of costs) the sum of \$50.00 for each offence.
- (6) The by-law shall come into force upon receiving the approval of the Ontario Municipal Board.



